

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions, and listings, of claims in this application.

All claims currently being amended are shown with deleted text struckthrough or double bracketed and new text underlined. Additionally, the status of each claim is indicated in parenthetical expression following the claim number.

Claims 1, 3-8, 10-12, 15-18, 21 and 23-25 remain in this application.

Claim 18 is being amended.

Claims 2, 9, 13, 14, 19, 20, 22 and 26 are being cancelled.

Claims 27-31 are being added.

Listing of Claims:

1. (Previously Presented): A topical composition comprising:
at least about 5% (w/v) ascorbic acid;
non-toxic zinc salt; and
water, wherein the composition has a pH of 3.5 to 4.1.
2. (Canceled).
3. (Previously Presented): The composition of claim 1, wherein the composition has a pH of about 3.7 to about 4.0.
4. (Original): The composition of claim 1, further comprising an anti-inflammatory compound.
5. (Original): The composition of claim 4, wherein the anti-inflammatory compound includes sulfur-containing anti-inflammatory compound.

6. (Original): The composition of claim 5, wherein the sulfur-containing anti-inflammatory compound is selected from the group consisting of cystine, cysteine, N-acetylcysteine, glutathione, cysteamine, S-methylcysteine, methionine and mixtures thereof.
7. (Original): The composition of claim 4, wherein the anti-inflammatory compound includes aminosugar.
8. (Original): The composition of claim 7, wherein the aminosugar includes glucosamine, mannosamine, N-acetylmannosamine, galactosamine, glucosamine-6-phosphate, N-acetylglucosamine, N-acetylmannosamine, N-acetylgalactosamine and mixtures thereof.
9. (Canceled).
10. (Original): The composition of claim 1, wherein the water is selected from the group consisting of distilled water, deionized water, distilled deionized water and mixtures thereof.
11. (Previously Presented): The composition of claim 1, wherein the non-toxic zinc salt is present in an amount ranging from about 0.5% to about 5% (w/v).
12. (Original): The composition of claim 11, wherein the non-toxic zinc salt is zinc sulfate.
13. (Canceled).
14. (Canceled).
15. (Original): The composition of claim 1, wherein the water is distilled or deionized water.
16. (Previously Presented): The composition of claim 1, further comprising a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.
17. (Original): The composition of claim 15, wherein the pharmaceutically acceptable carrier includes alkylene glycol, hydroxyalkylcellulose or a mixture thereof.

18. (Currently Amended): A topical composition comprising:
 - an aqueous solution including at least about 5.0% (w/v) pre-treated ascorbic acid [,](;) and
 - a non(-)toxic zinc salt [,](;) and
 - having a pH of 3.5 to 4.1.
19. (Canceled).
20. (Canceled).
21. (Original): The composition of claim 18, further comprising a stimulant of protein synthesis.
22. (Canceled).
23. (Original): The composition of claim 18, further comprising a precursor of melanin synthesis.
24. (Previously Presented): The composition of claim 18, further comprising about 15% to about 25% (w/v) ascorbic acid.
25. (Original): The composition of claim 18, wherein the topical composition is an aqueous solution, a serum, a lotion, an ointment, a cream, or a gel.
26. (Canceled).
27. (New): The composition of claim 1, wherein the ascorbic acid is stabilized by physical, non-chemical manipulation.
28. (New): The composition of claim 27, wherein the ascorbic acid is stabilized by dissolution in water at relatively high temperature and concentration.
29. (New): The composition of claim 24, wherein the ascorbic acid is stabilized by physical, non-chemical manipulation.
30. (New): The composition of claim 29, wherein the ascorbic acid is stabilized by dissolution in water at relatively high temperature and concentration.

31. (New): The composition of claim 29, wherein the physical, non-chemical stabilization of the ascorbic acid results from an equilibrium reaction between the ascorbic acid and monodehydroascorbic acid.